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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to develop a mentor program for Latino students in the College Discovery Program at Borough of Manhattan Community College. The mentor program was intended to address some of the needs experienced by Latino students and to improve retention rates. This paper describes the process involved in developing the mentor program. A literature review indicated factors that strongly affect student performance and persistence: language barriers; lack of role models; financial aid; and support services. A formative committee was established to plan the program. The committee formulated four general objectives for the mentor program: student recruitment; mentor recruitment; development of tracking forms; and evaluation and feedback. A pilot program involving 13 students and 10 mentors was implemented based on the recommendations of the committee. Appendices include: outline of mentor program; notes on the formative committee; notification letter sent to students; mentor profile form; student profile form; advertising flyer; mentor responsibilities and guidelines; student responsibilities and guidelines; and feedback form. (Contains 20 references.) (RDG)

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DEVELOPMENT OF A MENTOR PROGRAM FOR LATINO STUDENTS AT BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Emergence of Higher Education in America

P Perez

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Borough of Manhattan Community College

A practicum report presented to Programs for Higher Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University

September, 1999

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Abstract of a practicum report presented to Nova Southeastern University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

DEVELOPMENT OF A MENTOR PROGRAM FOR LATINO STUDENTS OF THE COLLEGE DISCOVERY PROGRAM AT BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

By

Pedro Perez

July, 1999

This study attempted to address a problem at Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) concerning services offered to Latino students. The college has a student body composed predominantly of African-American and Latino students. While there have been services geared specifically for the first group of students, the latter, who compose the second largest group on campus, do not benefit from similar services. The problem was that there were no programs in place specific to the Latino students of BMCC. The purpose of this study was to develop a mentor program specifically for the Latino students of the College Discovery Program.

In an effort to develop the mentor program, two primary research questions were formulated. The first was: What should the content be for a mentor program designed to meet the needs of the Latino students at BMCC? The second was: What are the design elements for such a program?

The development methodology was used in completing this study. An extensive literature review was conducted to assess factors that affect the performance of Latino students in higher education. Results of this review revealed five primary factors that strongly affect the performance, persistence, and completion of a degree. This included language barriers, lack of role models, financial aid, and support systems. A review of mentor programs was conducted to determine the basic components in the development of a mentor program.

The plan was to develop a mentor program to meet some of the many needs experienced by Latino student in college, specifically, retention of Latino students in the College Discovery Program (CD). To develop the mentor program, the first step was to conduct a review of literature. This allowed for the next progression which involved securing agreement and consent by the administration. This was necessary to facilitate some level of commitment by the CD Program to allow for the time and energy involved in such an endeavor. At this early point, the target student population was identified.

Once administrative agreement was reached, a formative committee was developed to discuss, plan, and review the mentor program during its various phases. Four general objectives for the mentor program were established. These included: (1) student recruitment, (2) mentor recruitment, (3) development of tracking forms, and (4) evaluation and feedback. A pilot program was later implemented.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) is a two-year community college located in downtown Manhattan. Its surroundings include such landmarks as the World Financial Center, World Trade Center, city and state courts, and the newly constructed Stuyvesant High School. Approximately 16,000 to 17,000 students enroll at BMCC enrolled per semester. Of these, 30 to 35% are Latino students, the second largest ethnic group. African-American students constitute the largest ethnic group at BMCC.

Nature of the Problem

The college offered some non-traditional services specific to the African-American students. Through the Office of Freshman Studies, a program called the Black Men's Initiative/Black Women's Initiative (BMI/BWI) was developed, which provided peer counseling, specially designed workshops, and some other additional services designed to motivate and retain African-American students in college. This program was in existence for approximately five years and is considered effective in reaching out to students and, more specifically, positively affecting retention and graduation rates.

While there were no hard data to measure the direct effects of this program to retention and or graduation, it appeared that many students were attracted to participating in the programs. The problem is that a similar program that might positively impact retention and or graduation for the second largest ethnic

group, the Latino students, does not exist. There is a need to develop a special program geared for the Latino students because 30 to 35% of BMCC students are from this ethnic background.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop a program similar to the BMI/BWI but geared to meet the needs of the Latino students. Since this is a new conception, a smaller initiative such as a mentor program would be appropriate initially. It is hoped that developing such a program would have a positive effect on the retention, and possibly graduation rates of the Hispanic students.

Significance to the Institution

Borough of Manhattan Community College is the only public two-year community college in New York City. The enrollment at BMCC can exceed over 16,000-17,000 students during a regular academic semester. However, during the 1994-1995 academic school year, a total of only 1,625 associate degrees were awarded, approximately 10% of the overall student enrollment (BMCC Fact Book, 1995, p. 36).

The exact graduation rates for students were not published by ethnicity. Efforts to ascertain these figures from the Office of Institutional Research of BMCC were unsuccessful. However, since 76% of the student body is composed of black and Hispanic students and since only about 10% of the overall student enrollment is graduating, it is essential to design and implement culturally specific programs with demonstrated success rates.

Nationwide, a total of 1,159,931 bachelor degrees were conferred during 1992 and 1993. Of those, white, non-Hispanic students received the overwhelming majority (947,309). Black, non-Hispanics accounted for 77,872 of all bachelor degrees conferred, while Hispanics accounted for only 45,376 (4%) of all bachelor degrees conferred (Digest of Educational Statistics, 1996, p. 288). It is evident that there is a need for developing or enhancing programs designed to increase retention and graduation rates of our Latino students.

Relationship to Seminar

One of the student objectives of the Emergence of Higher Education in America is to identify general themes, trends, or elements of the past that apply to educational institutions of the present day and to apply the knowledge to a problem in one's current job situation. This study attempts to identify elements pertaining to the success of Latino students in college. More specifically, it addresses the issue of mentors or role models as they relate to retention with possible application modalities.

Research Questions

This study has two primary research questions: (1) What should the content be for a mentor program specifically designed to meet some of needs of the Latino students? and, (2) What are appropriate design elements for such a program?

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In conducting a search of literature pertaining to Latinos in college and their survival, several primary issues became apparent. Thusly, this review is organized by the following concepts as they relate to Hispanic students in college: Language barriers, lack of role models, financial aid, support systems, and mentor programs.

Language Barriers

One of the primary issues that emerged regarding Latino students in college points to some difficulties pertaining to language skills. That is, a significant number of Latinos are born in countries other than the United States, and many are Spanish dominant. Some complete their secondary schooling in Spanish language countries and perform well. However, difficulties arise when they enter American schools to compete against English dominant students. Picken (1995) argues that a common need of this population will be for training and education in English as a Second Language. The findings of his study recognize that most of these students bring with them "high-level second language skills." Currently, there are approximately two million foreign born people in New York City, "perhaps the most numerous of any city in the country" (p. 2).

The City University of New York's student body reflects this trend. In a classic study conducted by Otheguy (1990) from the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, a comparison

of national trends of students in need of remediation is made to those entering the City University of New York (CUNY). Results of basic skills in mathematics, reading, and writing show a disproportionate number of students placed in remedial programs within CUNY as compared with national placements.

In this very extensive report, various elements of the actual placement test used within CUNY are severely criticized. It includes questioning the tests' systematic validity, arbitrary limitations of time for the test takers, ethnic biases that place black and Latino students at distinct disadvantages, and negative implications that place non-native speakers of English, or the English as a second language (ESL) student, into lengthened remedial courses and, consequently, course pre-requisites that keep them from taking content courses for credit. Thus, the time to complete a college degree can be lengthened sometimes by as much as two to three years (pp. 15-20).

A report from the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans (1996) cites two major difficulties related to the issue of language barriers. The first deals with limited access to programs, including colleges that offer ESL. Waiting lists for programs that offer this kind of training have been recorded in the "10s of thousands" in cities like Los Angeles (pp. 40-48). The second issue is related to a political rather than educational controversy about ESL programs. There is a perception or a misunderstanding that these type of programs somehow threaten American culture and values. That is, society at large makes

little if any distinction between ESL instruction and bilingual programs. In an English dominant society, it might appear to some that these programs might eliminate or decrease potential jobs for English dominant citizens. This premise is exacerbated by the proponents of the English only movement.

Lack of Role Models

Another variable relating to Latinos lack of success in higher education that emerged pertained to an identity factor, that is, the effects of limited role models in higher education on Latino student performance. In addition to the paucity of Hispanic academicians and administrators, the television media unfairly portrays Latinos in negative stereotypes. This is an important factor to consider in view of the possible effects of mass media on individual and group thinking.

Lichter and Amundson (1994) conducted a study regarding television, a major source of leisure activity, and Latinos. Hispanics are less visible today in prime time television than they were in the 1950s (p. 2). Needless to say, positive role models such as those portrayed in the Cosbys, a successful syndicated television series, casting doctors, lawyers, and college students in a family-centered situation comedy, are not being presented equitably for Hispanics, or at all. In fact Latinos were presented in negative roles "more than twice as often as whites and three times as often as blacks" (p. 9).

Manzo (1993) ties Latino student failures to the lack of sufficient Latino teachers. A report conducted by a national policy study institute for Latino affairs suggests that there is

an educational cycle of failure among Latinos that can only be broken by greater efforts to recruit, prepare, and retain Latino teachers (pp. 17-18). The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU, 1995) reports that only 2.2% of all full-time faculty nationwide is Hispanic. In an interview with HACU Dr. Patrick Lee, vice president for Academic Affairs at Barry University in Florida, addresses a synergy between Hispanic faculty and Hispanic students, with "large number[s] of Hispanic faculty members acting as a magnet for Hispanic faculty elsewhere, as well as role models for future professors" (p. 1). Additionally, the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans (1996) states that "there are too few Hispanic teachers, counselors, and administrators. Consequently, there are few school professionals who are linguistically, culturally, and socially empathetic to the needs of Hispanic students" (p. 44).

An earlier study by Monsivais (1990) has similar findings regarding the lack of Latino teachers. A total of 438 teachers were surveyed in an attempt to determine factors related to perceived level of professional preparation, working environment, and characteristics that may affect the achievement of Latino students. A projected shortage of teachers in general, and Latino teachers specifically, is expected to widen the gap between the Latino student-teacher ratio. This is viewed as a critical factor in the learning process (pp. 3-6).

Jose-Kampfner (1994) attempts to explain why so many Latino students leave school before graduating high school and also

finds that role models are a pertinent factor. Other variables such as the home, school, and the community are examined to bring greater understanding of violence and its relationship to poor school performance (pp. 4-8). The issue of tight-knitted circles of young people watching their parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and others suffer in search for employment without success is raised vis-à-vis a sharing of humiliation and lack of role models (p. 3). O'Brien (1993) argues that Hispanics are underrepresented in employment in higher education, especially at higher administrative levels (pp. 1-2).

Monsivais (1990) ties the lack of Latino faculty to individualized faculty counseling, which was identified as a major barrier regarding the shortage of Latino teachers by most of the respondents. Only 29% of those responding to a survey report receiving aid in the form of counseling, and only 11% received aid in the form of mentoring (p. 5). Muzzio and Miranda (1995) tie an inability to identify influential Latino leaders to the lack of role models. Results from interviews with a cross-section of 1005 Hispanic adults eighteen and over reveal some interesting findings, such as the number one problem facing Hispanics in New York is discrimination (p. 7).

Support Systems

A comprehensive study conducted by Hurtado, Contes, Spuder, Dale, and Pipkin (1994) attempts to bring understanding of the factors that affect Latino student experiences in the first year of college, and adjustment in the second year. Data were collected through a national longitudinal survey of Latino

students along with a psychometrically tested instrument, the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire. In short,

> Managing resources, maintaining independence yet sustaining healthy family relationships/support, and success in getting to know their way around the various geographies of a campus are important transitional experiences in the first year that are hypothesized to have a positive effect on college adjustment in the second year. (pp. 5-6)

Student behavior during the first and second year of college is positively associated with adjustment and possibly persistence.

Familiarity with the college and the ability to socially interact are two variables identified by Hurtado, Contes, Spuder, Dale, and Pipkin (1994) that suggest that experiences that facilitate successful adjustment to college can act as mediators of adjustment. Perceptions by Latino students of a student-centered faculty and administration had a positive association with academic adjustment in the second year. The amount of time socializing with friends in the first year of college was positively associated with social adjustment. Of interest was the finding that "resident advisors, academic counselors, and upper-class students all had positive influence on students' adjustment to the institution" (p. 11).

Family support was a clear key factor for Latino students in the educational process. LeSure (1994) finds that the absence of support, family and resources, in combination with inner stress can have negative effects for students as they confront normal life changes (pp. 11-13).

Financial Aid

In hearings in 1994 held before the United States Senate, Committee on Labor and Human Resources, the 103rd Congress dealt with the issue of minority participation and retention in higher education. The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) presented some of their findings in a research report entitled Student Financial Aid: Impact on Hispanics and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (1994). Hispanic-Americans will be a key element in the economic and social development of the United States in the next coming decades. Unfortunately, despite a 53% increase in the total Hispanic population between 1980 and 1990, the percentage of Hispanics who attended college decreased over that same period (pp. 93-141).

Financial aid is recognized as an essential component for assuring access to higher education particularly for Hispanics, most of who have below average incomes and face geographical and cultural barriers that inhibit participation in higher education. In 1991, over 867,000 Latinos enrolled in post-secondary institutions, half of whom would have had difficulty attending or may not have attended college at all without some form of financial aid(United States Congress, 1994, pp. 103-104).

Surprisingly, despite the considerably low incomes of Hispanic students, the average award of $3,466 was packaged for members of this group, lower than that of every other racial ethnic group. Hurtado, Contes, Spuder, Dale, and Pipkin (1994) find that successful management of student resources such as time, schedules, and finances in the first year of college has a

strong impact on academic and personal-emotional adjustment in later years (pp. 5-7).

Monsivais (1990), in a study regarding Latino teachers, finds that 62% of those he surveyed identified financial cost as a major barrier to Latinos pursuing teaching careers (p. 4). Additionally, the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans (1996) predicts the outlook for Latino students requiring financial aid as bleak forcing many into taking out loans. Many prefer to avoid loans and opt for part-time enrollment, or increasing their work schedules, naturally increasing the length of time required to graduate. "During the past five years, Pell Grants as a percentage of total student aid, have steadily decreased, especially at community colleges where the majority of Hispanic American students access postsecondary education" (p. 51). This is an important factor to consider in developing programs to meet the needs of Latino students.

Between 1980 and 1990, the number of first-year, foreign-born and Puerto Rican-born CUNY students increased from 33% to 41%. This population is extraordinarily diverse with a variety of educational backgrounds ranging from almost no formal study prior to their arrival to solid post-secondary preparation. In, The CUNY Student of the Future: A New Profile (Picken, 1995), there is speculation that by the year 2000, at least half of CUNY's first-time freshmen will have been born abroad or in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. This incorporates a recent study that attempts to examine recent immigration trends from foreign

countries, as well as migration from Puerto Rico. More than half of CUNY's student population is bilingual or capable of being bilingual with minimal effort (p. 2).

Mentor Programs

Weinberger (1992) discusses mentoring as "an old idea that works" (p. 9). The term mentor is defined as having its origin from the Greek meaning steadfast and enduring. A study conducted in a two-year program in New Mexico showed that mentor programs have a positive affect on retention and grade point average (Twomey, 1991, p. 3). Using an experimental design, two control groups were tested for the effects of the mentoring relationship on retention and performance. Findings indicate that while both retention and grade point average were positively affected, retention is greater for participants in a group condition with one mentor assigned, rather than one mentee with an individual mentor assigned. This conclusion was drawn from students who volunteered to participate in a mentoring relationship (pp. 36-37.

Weinberger (1992) identifies six steps to consider in developing a mentor program. These include:

1. Recruitment and Screening
2. Orientation and Training
3. Matching and Responsibilities
4. Weekly Sessions
5. Evaluation
6. Year-End Celebrations and Renewal (pp. 12-20).

Some of these concepts were adapted and incorporated into the mentor program at BMCC.

Mentor programs have taken on various forms in academia today. The use of technology has allowed for more innovative methods to offer mentor possibilities. Haworth (1998) discusses a new model initiated by Dartmouth College that targets female students pursuing careers in science, engineering, and mathematics. The program is conducted completely through electronic mail and is referred to as "e-mentoring" (pp. A29-30).

Dartmouth's program was launched two years ago and is now being modeled nationally through a program called "MentorNet." Over 200 students have been matched with professionals, and 15 colleges participate in this endeavor. A web site for this program is available on-line via the internet (Haworth, 1998, p. A30).

Gold (1998) discusses her experience with an advice writer known as "Ms. Mentor", who authored Impeccable Advice for Women in Academia. She raises both advantages and disadvantages of Ms. Mentor's advice. Gold concludes her discussion with an anecdote which seems apropos here: "An old Hasidic story tells of Rabbi Zusya, who said a short time before his death, 'In the world to come they will not ask me, Why were you not Moses, our teacher? Rather they will ask me, Why were you not Zusya?'" (p. B7). The moral of the story as it relates to mentoring is clear. The role of the mentor is an important one, which can affect the mentee in different ways; yet in the end, the student must forge his/her own fate and maintain their individuality.

Conclusions

Latino students in higher education specifically, and in education generally, are not keeping up with national graduation rates of other non-Latinos. Various factors have been studied to determine possible starting points for intervention. It is important that those individuals in academia who are concerned with the development of society through education begin to put into place programs, such as mentoring programs, that might positively impact the experience of Latino students in higher education as they relate to admission into college, persistence in college, and finally, completion of a college degree.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The development methodology was used to design a program geared specifically for the Latino students of BMCC to positively impact student retention and academic performance. The following procedures were used to complete this study. First, a review of related literature was conducted to seek information about factors that can be connected to Latino student persistence in college. Based on this information, programs can be developed, or initiatives can be structured, that might positively affect the students both in the areas of retention and academically. The literature review also included data on mentor programs to seek model programs that might be adapted to BMCC.

Second, the possibility of creating a mentor program was raised in a meeting with the director of the CD Program. The rationale was provided using information obtained through the review of literature that spoke to the difficulties encountered by Latino students in higher education. After some discussion, it was agreed that developing a mentor program could be beneficial for CD students. It was also agreed to target the Latino students in the CD program through a letter for potential participants. Additionally, mentors would be sought both from within the BMCC campus and from the external community.

A listing of Latino students from the College Discovery (CD) Program was solicited from the registrar's office. A total of 342 students were identified. These were offered the chance to volunteer for a mentor assignment through a letter.

Third, a formative committee was developed. The committee was composed of two counselors familiar with the program and the director of the CD program. This committee was used to critique the mentor program, review related correspondence, including handouts developed for both students and mentors.

Fourth, a list of objectives for the program was developed using some guidelines ascertained through the literature review. A preliminary sketch of the program was devised, and an informational sheet about the program was drawn up to solicit potential mentors and participants for the program. Fifth, following some model programs identified through the literature review, the formative committee agreed that the mentor program would include the following: a guide for the mentors, a guide for the students, informational letters and flyers, forms for matching participants with mentors, on-going and consistent communication with the coordinator, and a mechanism for feedback.

Sixth, the various components of the mentor program were completed and validated by a summative evaluation committee. The components included mentor profiles, mentor responsibilities, student profiles, and student responsibilities. Seventh, the program plan was presented to the Director of College Discovery with plans for implementation

Assumptions

It was assumed that the evaluation of the formative committee was reliable and valid inasmuch as they have expertise in dealing with urban community college students. It was also assumed that retention and academic performance are valid objectives for the success of a mentor program. Additionally, it was assumed that programs that are geared to meet specific needs of a specific student population have a higher probability of a positive impact on retention and performance.

Limitations

The results of this study were limited in that the Latino CD students of BMCC may not be a generalizable population of the overall Latino student body. College Discovery students are selected through a lottery of applications which undergo both economic and financial eligibility scrutiny. The study was also limited in that the mentor program, in and of itself, may not cause any specific changes in student performance and retention patterns. Other variables such as an increase or decrease in student aid during the time of this study may have affected Latino students' performance and/or retention.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The development of the mentor program for Latino College Discovery students at BMCC involved input and feedback from other counselors, faculty, and students A review of related literature was conducted to seek information about factors that might affect the persistence of Latino students in higher education. Once completed, it became evident that the primary issues related to the success of Latinos in college could be categorized under the rubric of five broad areas. These included: Language barriers, lack of role models, support systems, and financial aid. The literature review also included information gathering on mentor programs. This provided a framework for the mentor program to be developed that would respond to the needs of Latino students at BMCC.

Once the literature review was completed, the information was informally presented to the director of CD to seek support for developing a mentor program. It seemed an opportune time to discuss this type of initiative since the CD Program was undergoing some changes. The CD Program was being asked by other administrative bodies to develop and implement new initiatives. Thus, it was agreed that such an endeavor would be worthwhile. A plan for developing the mentor program was discussed (Appendix A). Consent was given for undertaking the development of a mentor program.

A formative committee was put together (Appendix B). It was composed of two counselors from the CD program, and the Acting

Director of College Discovery who met twice as a full committee. Later, and throughout the process, committee members were consulted individually on an as needed basis.

During the first meeting of the formative committee, a general overview of the concept of developing a mentor program was provided. Some of the findings of the literature review were shared. The details about which students would be targeted for this project were discussed. It was agreed that the opportunity to participate in the program would be given to the entire Latino student enrolled in the College Discovery Program for that semester.

The committee also agreed that the best way to announce the program to the students was through a letter. This letter was later revised and shared with committee members individually (Appendix C). A listing of these students was sought from the administrative computer center along with labels for a mailing.

The committee discussed the issue of how to solicit mentors and agreed that both faculty from the college and others from the external community could serve as mentors. An announcement about the program was discussed, and it was agreed that a memorandum would be devised to solicit volunteers who would be willing to particpate in the mentor program. The memorandum was drawn at a later time and shared with the members of the formative committee individually (Appendix D).

The last item discussed during this first meeting was about the format for bringing potential mentors and the students together. It was agreed that a large group forum would be a good

way to launch the program. Some discussion about how this might occur ensued. The meeting was held in a private office and lasted for about 40 minutes.

During the second meeting with the formative committee, the primary objectives of the mentoring program were discussed and agreed upon. Essentially, the primary purpose of the mentor program was to retain Latino students of the CD Program in BMCC by facilitating adaptation to the college environment through a mentoring relationship. It was hoped that offering this type of activity would positively affect their ability to maintain enrollment and, eventually, graduate. The following four objectives were identified: (1) to recruit potential volunteer students from the CD Program for participation; (2) to recruit potential mentors who would volunteer one-to-two hours weekly with their assigned mentees; (3) to develop tracking forms for matching students with mentors; and (4) to create a mechanism for evaluation and feedback of the mentors.

The first two objectives, to recruit students, and to recruit mentors, were principally dealt with during the first meeting of the formative committee. To address the third objective regarding the tracking of students, and in anticipation of this need, forms were prepared in draft form based on information from the literature review and on the organizational structure of the college. The drafts were discussed and reviewed during this meeting.

These included: a flyer about the development of a new program (Appendix E); mentor profile forms where potential

mentors would identify basic information such as office hours, telephone numbers, and their areas of expertise and interest (Appendix F); student profile forms where students would provide general identification information, e.g., name, address, telephone numbers, and their areas of career interest (Appendix G); a mentor responsibilities fact sheet that would provide some basic structure and framework for the mentor (Appendix H); a student responsibilities fact sheet that would provide a basic framework and expectations of their participation (Appendix I); a mentor assignment letter that would be given to each mentor informing them of their assigned student (Appendix J); and a mentor evaluation form where mentors could comment about their experience and/or communicate concerns (Appendix K).

Some revisions were recommended and accepted. Specifically, the forms that were to be used as profiles were enhanced to allow both the student and the mentor to comment and elaborate on their experiences and preferences. The rationale for the change was to allow for more information that could be used in the matching process, that is, the assigning of a particular student to a particular mentor.

The issue of mentors was again raised as a concern during the second meeting. The committee had preoccupations with the difficulty a new program might have in attracting suitable mentors. While it was believed that the program could easily draw students, it was thought that attracting mentors would be a more difficult objective. It was agreed that in addition to the college community, mentors would also be solicited from

professional associations that might be appropriate for students enrolled in business related degree programs such as management, accounting, and finance and banking. A letter would be prepared for outreach to these potential volunteers (Appendix L). A carefully primed letter could have a significant impact on the pool of potential mentors. Naturally this was an important item in the development of a mentor program because without mentors, there would be no program. Since monetary remuneration was not a possibility, other measures that might be of attraction, particularly to volunteer mentors, would need to be integrated into written documentation and correspondence. This meeting was held in a private office and lasted for approximately 30 minutes.

A summative committee was formed (Appendix M) with the charge of reviewing the mentor program's objectives, as well as the various components discussed and agreed upon by the formative committee. This committee was unable to meet as a group. Each member was provided with packets of information containing copies of all the forms and letters that were to be used. In a meeting with each member individually, the mentor program was discussed, and the objectives defined. The primary purpose of the program was to help retain and eventually graduate Latino students of the CD program of BMCC. Developing a mentor program, in view of the information and rationale presented might have a positive affect on retention and graduation. All three members were in agreement that the plan was worth implementing.

Pilot Implementation

A date was set, and letters went out to students and mentors to attend a special meeting for a brief orientation about the program. Packets were distributed containing some of the previously mentioned items such as, profiles, responsibilities, and a news clipping about the mentor experience [HACU, January/February, 1995, p. 6).

To reiterate, it was agreed to target all of the Latino students enrolled in the semester for a mailing that would inform them about the program and provide the opportunity to participate. A mailing was sent to the Latino students of the CD Program. These students were informed about the opportunity to be assigned to a mentor and invited to a special workshop to meet mentors who agreed to volunteer for the program through both individual mailings, and college-wide flyers. Mentors would then be assigned to students using the completed profiles matched with areas of interest. Mentors and their assigned students were encouraged to begin, and maintain, an open channel of communication throughout the semester.

The total number of targeted Latino students targeted for the mentor program was 342, of which 245 (72%) were female, and 97 (28%) were male. Interestingly, in the implementation phase, only a total of 20 students attended the orientation program, or 6% of all of the students identified. Of these 13 (65%) were female and 7 (35%) were male. Table 1 shows a comparison by sex of students invited to attend the mentor program to those that

Table 1

Comparison of Students Invited to Those Who Attended

Students Invited		Students Attended
Female	245	13
Male	97	7
Total	342	20

actually attended during a pilot implementation of the mentor program.

At the conclusion of the semester, an evaluation form was sent to the mentors seeking feedback regarding their experiences. These were later analyzed and reported to the director in various meetings. Most of the meetings were unscheduled and occurred on an as needed basis in view of severe time constraints.

Table 2

Mentor Program Rates of Participation

	Identified	Attended	Assigned
Students	342	20	13
Mentors	20	6	10

As previously mentioned, 342 students were identified by the registrar's office for possible participation. Of those, slightly less than 6% (20) attended. Table 2 represents the

rates of participation during various stages of the development of the mentor program. Approximately 4% (13) of the total number of students identified were assigned mentors. It should be noted that other students, approximately 10, expressed verbal interest in the mentor program but were unable to attend the orientation. Assignments for these students were also attempted. By comparison approximately 20 faculty members from various departments responded to the call for mentors made through memorandums and other correspondence. Of those 30% (6) attended the orientation, and 50% or 10 mentors were assigned to students.

During the orientation program, the mentors that attended gave brief descriptions about their field of expertise and their current positions. At the conclusion of this program students were given the opportunity to identify the mentor they most preferred.

For the subsequent two weeks, assignments were made matching student profiles with available mentors. The criteria used in this process included student curriculum, student interests, faculty expertise, faculty interests, and other factors such as student preferences as identified in both student and mentor profiles.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop a mentor program for Latino students in the College Discovery Program. Students were given the opportunity to have a mentor assigned to them for the semester. Potential students and volunteer mentors were invited to attend a large group session where an orientation to the program was offered. Assignments would be made using tracking forms developed, such as mentor and student profile forms. These would facilitate the matching process by using interest and/or career variables as identified by the participants.

The first research question raised pertained to identification of factors that should be taken into consideration in developing a mentor program specifically for Latino students. The literature review revealed a number of issues that have been analyzed in assessing retention and graduation of this population. The mentor program that was developed made an effort to incorporate some of these factors by providing both the students and the mentors with related information especially during the initial orientation program.

The second question was intended to identify some of the specific elements inherent in constructing a mentor program in an academic setting. Two primary sources (Twomey 1991, Weinberger 1993) helped define some of the parameters for developing such a

program and an effort was made to incorporate these into the mentor program for Latino students at BMCC.

Matching the students with mentors, or the mentors with students, was a more difficult task than originally conceived. This difficulty in making assignments was attributed to several reasons. First, only a handful of the mentors who agreed to participate in the program actually initiated contact and maintained some communication with the coordinator either via telephone, or through interoffice notes. Second, those who did volunteer were not as diverse in their backgrounds as hoped for. Third, some students who requested mentors seemed unclear as to the role of the mentors despite packets of information disseminated.

Those students who were assigned mentors seemed to face another unanticipated problem. That is, they appeared to either lack sufficient time to make regular contact with their mentors. This occurrence is in keeping with a finding by Hurtado, et al, (1994) that suggests a correlation among student time, scheduling, and retention (pp. 5-6).

Another reason why contact was limited might be connected to an unwillingness to follow through with the program. While the program was structured with little rigidity, they might have been discouraged by its apparent formality. Making the first contact was strongly recommended to the prospective mentor. However, it required follow through by the student in situations where an attempted telephone contact by the mentor was unsuccessful. In this case the student was expected to follow up the attempted

contact either by telephone, in person, or through correspondence.

Conclusions

The basic content for developing a mentor program was determined. Additionally, the basic elements inherent in such a program were also established. Essentially, mentor programs must have student participants, mentors, and some basic framework to establish a relationship.

Prearranged mentor assignments for some may be akin to prearranged marriages. That is, the development of the relationship may appear contrived and unnatural. This might be one of the reasons why during the pilot implementation phase some mentors did not initiate or maintain any type of communication with the program coordinator after the orientation session. It may also explain why students had difficulty maintaining regular contact with their assigned mentors even though they were informed from the onset to contact the program coordinator for reassignments or possible difficulties.

At the conclusion of the development of the mentor program, mentors were given the opportunity to evaluate their experience. Unfortunately, few completed evaluations were returned. Those that were completed came predominantly from mentors who had difficulty making and/or keeping contact with the student participants. The feedback on the questionnaires reflected this phenomena.

Implications

Developing a mentor program for Latino students, the purpose of this study, revealed that while possible, other factors must be taken into account. It is not enough to design a program of interest and specific to a particular population. There must be some accommodation for time constraints, career interest, academic difficulties, and room for flexibility.

Time constraints and scheduling difficulties are factors that could not be controlled in the coordination of this mentor program. It is presumed that those who willingly volunteer will make the time to participate. If either of the parties is unable to comply with their agreement, a simple note or message to that effect would alleviate this ambiguity for the individual coordinating the effort and the other party involved.

Students were asked to identify their career of interest in a student profile. This information was then used to match them with a mentor. While it was believed that this would produce a positive relationship, there was no evidence to this effect.

Students also identified areas or subjects where they were experiencing difficulties. This was also used in matching them with mentors where a match existed. Verbal feedback from some of these students gave the impression that they visualized the mentor in a tutorial role, and may have expected assistance or intervention very early in the assignment with course content areas.

Recommendations

Three primary recommendations emerged at the completion of this study. First, that a formal mechanism for ascertaining student feedback should be initiated. In the current structure written feedback was arranged for the mentors. While the opportunity for open channels of communication was made evident, a written response may provide greater breadth and understanding of both strengths and weaknesses. This type of evaluation would allow for better understanding of the student perspective and may give clues to future possibilities for the mentor program.

Second, the mentor program should be further studied by following up on the students who were assigned mentors to assess persistence in college, and later, graduation. This kind of information would help determine if a mentor program should be enhanced, or even continued. Additionally, the findings of this study should be made available to other counselors and faculty members who might be interested in a similar undertaking.

Third, the cost effectiveness of operating a mentor program should be evaluated in view of several factors. One of these is time. A significant portion of time was spent coordinating the various details of the program. An arrangement for release time may be useful and appropriate. Additionally, the cost effectiveness of staffing the mentor program through peer counselors and/or work-study students should be explored.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Mentor Program Plan

1. Conduct a review of related literature.
2. Seek agreement by the administration.
3. Develop a formative committee.
4. Establish objectives for the mentor program.
5. Develop related forms and letters.
6. Develop a summative committee.
7. Present to administration for implementation.

Appendix B

Formative Committee

The first member of the formative committee was a member of the counseling center of BMCC for over 10 years. Her credentials include a master's degree in counseling, and a few post-graduate courses.

The second member of the formative committee was another member of the counseling unit who has been with the center only recently. Her appointment was provisional, however, being of Hispanic background, her input was directly connected and relevant to the study. Educationally she has completed a terminal degree in social work.

The third member of the committee included the Director of the College Discovery Program. She has been a member of the counseling department of student life for many years. Her educational background also includes a terminal degree in social work, as well as former experience in counseling in non-profit organizations.

Appendix C

Borough of Manhattan Community College
City University of New York
College Discovery Program

Dear College Discovery Student,

In an effort to further assist and support College Discovery students in their academic development, we are coordinating a new program called the CD Mentor Program. The primary objective of this program is to enhance the educational potential of our Latino students.

As such, we have scheduled a workshop with the theme: Where is my Mentor? During this activity, students will discuss the various factors related to school and the "real" world. You will have the opportunity to meet professionals in accounting business, private industry, the health sciences, and other careers. At the conclusion of the program we hope to be able to arrange a mentor for at least 15-20 students.

Please plan to attend a workshop scheduled for Thursday, May 4, at 2:00 PM in room N405. Don't miss out on an opportunity to network, speak out, and make connections.

To confirm your participation, or for further information please call (212) 346-8148/8130 and leave your name and career of interest with the receptionist.

Show your support for activities that can make a difference.

Sincerely,

Pedro Perez
Counselor

Appendix D

Borough of Manhattan Community College
City University of New York
College Discovery Program
MEMORANDUM

TO: College Community
FROM: Pedro Perez, Counselor
RE: College Discovery Mentor Program

The College Discovery Program, is engaging in a special effort to develop a mentor program. We are seeking to identify potential mentors in disciplines such as: accounting, business, early childhood education, computers, communication, health, human services, math, nursing, science, and other areas.

If you are interested in volunteering one, maybe two hours a week to serve as a mentor and make a significant difference in the lives of our aspiring Latino youth, please complete the bottom portion of this sheet. More information will be sent to you at a later time.

YES - I am interested being a mentor:

_____ (NAME) _____ (ROOM)

_____ (DISCIPLINE) _____ (EXTENSION)

Please return to Pedro Perez in S337

Appendix E

Borough of Manhattan Community College

The College Discovery Program

Presents a Special Program

WHERE IS MY MENTOR?

Learn: What is a mentor?
Why Do I Want a Mentor?

Meet Latino Professionals in Diverse Careers

Accounting, Business, Teaching, Health, etc.

Make time to be there on

Thursday, May 4th
Room N405
2:00-4:00 PM

For more information contact:
Pedro Perez, ext. 8148, S337

Appendix F

Borough of Manhattan Community College
City University of New York
College Discovery Program

MENTOR PROFILE

Date: _____

Name: _____

Discipline/Subject: _____

Address: _____

Room #: _____

Telephone #: _____

Education: _____

Special Interests or hobbies: _____

Best time to call: _____

Best time to visit: _____

Other information that will allow for more accurately matching you with a student:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix G

Borough of Manhattan Community College
City University of New York
College Discovery Program

STUDENT PROFILE

Date: _____

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone #: _____

Name of Counselor: _____

Major/Curriculum _____

Credits Completed: _____

Future Career / Occupation: _____

Favorite Subjects/Courses: _____

Most Difficult Subjects/Courses: _____

Special Interests or hobbies: _____

Best time to call: _____

Please expand on any of the above items. Also include any other information that you feel will be useful, e.g. - favorite sports, religious affiliation, associations, etc. This will facilitate matching you with an appropriate mentor.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix H

Borough of Manhattan Community College
City University of New York
College Discovery Program

Some Mentor Responsibilities & Guidelines

Contact:

Try to maintain some weekly communication with the student. Telephone calls, office visits, and even mail can sometimes help the student in feeling a sense of connectedness. Be at ease. The contacts should continue throughout the academic semester.

Office Visit:

If possible, try to schedule an office visit with the student. Plan maybe on-half hour where the student can sit with you and observe your daily functions. For the upper level student it will enhance their perceptions about the real world of work. For the lower level student it will be an orientation.

Communication:

The general content of the communications should revolve around career and academic issues. The conversations should be informative. Oftentimes the student will be experiencing difficulty in a content course such as MAT 150, or CHE 110. The mentor could assist by offering alternative methods of problem solving. If difficulties persist, the student should be referred to the counseling center in (S330). The mentors' own college related experiences may be sufficient to address these types of contacts.

Feedback and Evaluation:
Matching a student with a mentor, or a mentor with a student is not as simple as one, two, three - (a little levity). Once contact has been initiated both the student and the mentor will have as sense of whether the match is potentially progressive, or an uneven match. If the latter is the case feel free to contact me for a change of assignment. At a later point both the student and the mentor will have a chance to evaluate their experiences. Hopefully this will lead to improved services. Additionally, you should feel free to share your thoughts with me as the semester progresses.

Final Note:

Enjoy this experience! These guidelines have been provided as a point of reference. Your mentor experience is unique and should flow naturally. Our primary goal is to assist students in their

pursuit of a college education. Not enough Latino students begin college, and fewer graduate. This is our primary focus.

Pedro Perez (S-337)
College Discovery
(212) 346-8148

Appendix I

Borough of Manhattan Community College
City University of New York
College Discovery Program

Some Student Responsibilities & Guidelines

Contact:

Try to maintain some weekly communication with your mentor. Telephone calls, office visits, and even mail can sometimes help in a feeling of connectedness. Be at ease. The contacts should continue throughout the academic semester.

Office Visit:

If possible, try to schedule an office visit with the mentor. Plan maybe on-half hour where you can sit with your mentor and observe their daily functions. For the upper level student it will enhance their perceptions about the real world of work. For the lower level student it will be an orientation.

Communication:

The general content of the communications should revolve around career and academic issues. The conversations should be informative. Oftentimes a student will be experiencing difficulty in a content course such as MAT 150, or CHE 110. The mentor could assist by offering alternative methods of problem solving. If difficulties persist, the student should be referred to the counseling center in (S330).

Feedback and Evaluation:
Matching a student with a mentor, or a mentor with a student is not as simple as one, two, three - (a little levity). Once contact has been initiated both the student and the mentor will have as sense of whether the match is potentially progressive, or an uneven match. If the latter is the case feel free to contact me for a change of assignment. At a later point both the student and the mentor will have a chance to evaluate their experiences. Hopefully this will lead to improved services. Additionally, you should feel free to share your thoughts with me as the semester progresses.

Final Note:

Enjoy this experience! These guidelines have been provided as a point of reference. Your mentor experience is unique and should flow naturally. Our primary goal is to assist students in their pursuit of a college education. Not enough Latino student begin college, and fewer graduate. This is our primary focus.

Unidos y Adelante
Pedro Perez (S-337)
College Discovery
(212) 346-8148

Appendix J

Borough of Manhattan Community College
City University of New York
College Discovery Program

Dear Prospective Mentor:

The College Discovery Mentor Program would like to introduce to you Mr./Ms. _____, a student of BMCC. You have been assigned to be his/her mentor. please note the following information:

Name: _____
Curriculum: _____
# of Credits: _____
Telephone #: _____

You are about to engage in an activity that few people have experienced. The mentor-student relationship is a very special one which relies on some very basic principles of care and concern for others. The time you spend with the student can have a strong impact on their education and career.

With this in mind I hope that you will share your comments and concerns about your experience. Feel free t o contact me at (212) 346-8148.

Congratulations on your decision to serve as a mentor.

Sincerely,

Pedro Perez
College Discovery Mentor Program

Appendix K

Borough of Manhattan Community College
City University of New York
College Discovery Program

MENTOR PROGRAM

Please provide written feedback about your experience with the mentor program. Your candid reply would be appreciated.

Mentor: _____

Date: _____

Appendix L

Borough of Manhattan Community College
City University of New York
College Discovery Program

(Date)

(Address)

Dear _____:

I am currently working as a counselor in the College Discovery Program of Borough of Manhattan Community College. We are currently in the process of developing a new initiative for our Latino students in the College Discovery Program. As such, we are trying to identify volunteers for a new Mentor Program.

This is an effort to match our students in various curriculums such as business, accounting, human services, computers, etc. with professionals in similar positions. Your assistance in identifying possible candidates who could serve as mentors by donating approximately one-half hour, to an hour, will be greatly appreciated.

A workshop entitled, **Where Is my Mentor?** is scheduled for Thursday, May 4, at 2:00 PM. Potential mentors should plan to attend.

I sincerely hope that we will be able to collaborate to form a successful mentor program with your company/organization. I will be in contact with you regarding this very shortly. Please feel free to call me if I can be of any assistance at (212) 346-8148.

Respectfully yours,

Prof. Pedro Perez
Counselor
College Discovery Program

Appendix M

Summative Committee

The first member of the summative committee was a faculty member from the department of health education. Her professional experience includes teaching assignments at BMCC for approximately five years. Educationally, she has completed a masters degree in health sciences, and some post graduate courses.

The second member of the summative committee was a faculty member of the department of modern languages. An adjunct member of BMCC for approximately five years, her educational background includes a doctorate in Spanish.

The third member of the committee included the Director of the College Discovery Program. She has been a member of the counseling department of student life for many years. Her educational background also includes a terminal degree in social work, as well as former experience in counseling in non-profit organizations.